

How to Avoid a Pickpocket

7 Personal Security Measures

The Annual Internal Security Report (IASI) for the year 2017 points to “theft” as the most frequent crime, one of its main forms being, theft by pickpockets.

It can be said that theft by pickpockets is based on a lapse of security taken advantage of by the criminal agent – namely the pickpocket – involving the theft of certain goods that are in the possession of the victim, such as inside a pocket or a briefcase. The pickpocket is patient, astute, and a strategist, as he plans and studies all phases of his performance and masters effective methods of theft without the victim noticing or considering the anomalous situation. He analyses the circumstances around him and waits for the best opportunity to carry out the theft.



Theft by pickpockets usually takes place in large crowded places, where the attention of the victim is drawn to the natural environment (tourism, sightseeing and on vacations), involving the use of diversion tactics (such as standing close-by, a push or request for information); the pickpocket using an item that facilitates and hides the act of theft (newspaper, briefcase, coat and map) and / or the help of other pickpockets who distract the victim, looking out for police activity and assisting in hiding stolen objects.

In this scenario, the criminal usually appears as a normal citizen, perfectly integrated within the environment, is educated and will try to adopt any measure that arouses less suspicion, disguising himself if necessary.

For the above reasons, criminal prevention of this type and form of crime will necessarily involve citizens' awareness of this trend, in particular as regards to the personal security measures to be taken, without prejudicing the preventive and enforcement activity carried out by the security forces.

Our capacity for self-protection depends very much on our level of attention to the context and the preventive measures adopted. Like this:

1. Bring only the goods and values that are effectively needed and never leave them in sight except for normal use.
2. In situations where there are large crowds of people (public transport, shopping malls and tourist areas), special attention should be paid to the places where they carry their goods and values and do not, as far as possible, allow external contact with them.
3. Preferably use the inner pockets of the clothing to store your goods and valuables or, if not possible, the front pockets that have a clasp.
4. Avoid keeping your public transport ticket in the wallet or, if it is not possible, try not to open the wallet at stops or in large crowded places.
5. In carrying suitcases, bags and backpacks always ensure they are closed in the front, if not possible, protect them locks with padlocks, with goods of higher value transported in a closed inner bag.

6. When sitting in an esplanade, restaurant or public transport, never place your valuable items (mobile phone and wallet) on the table or chair, and the suitcase should be placed next to you, or between your feet and secured by the respective handles.

7. When making cash withdrawals, do not allow others to be near you so that they can see your pin number.

If you adopt these preventive steps, the pickpockets will realize that you are alert and cautious and they will give up their illicit intentions. However, if you suspect that you are being followed by a pickpocket, do not hesitate to contact the Police or, possible, go to any establishment and ask for help, and you can always call 112.

If you are effectively a victim of crime, report it to any police force, because only with this information can proper steps be planned taken for crime prevention and enforcement within the scope of police activity.

Portugal is the third most peaceful county in the world in the annual report of the Global Peace Index of 2017, but the Public Security Police will do everything to reach 1st place!

As an example, the PSP Metropolitan Command of Lisbon carried out 534 arrests for pickpocketing in the three-year period from 2015 to 2017 as well as being an active member in several international groups of information and knowledge sharing regarding this criminal phenomenon.

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